

**RACE, CULTURAL GROUPS, SOCIAL
DIFFERENTIATION**

**MISSIONARY EDUCATION IN LEBANON: A STUDY IN
ACCUULTURATION**

AND L. TANNER
University of Missouri

P-338(d)

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361 I N ITS population of 1,200 people and general social organization, Bshamin is typical of the Lebanese village communities. It is situated in the foothills of the Lebanon mountains, fifty miles to the north of Beirut and twelve miles to the south of Tripoli, the two seaports of the country. The writer was born and grew up in this village. He is the product of its native Arab culture, as influenced and modified by the invading American culture. The present article is based upon personal experience—his own, with an Arab-American background, and that of his people, who have lived in the same village for eight generations.

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795 With respect to the religious situation in the village previous to the appearance of mission activity, it is sufficient to emphasize a few salient facts. In the first place, there were in the village three religious sects—a large majority of Greek Orthodox (about 1000 people), a small minority of Maronites (about 150 people), and three Maronite households, which will be neglected in the discussion. Secondly, the relationship between the two religious sects had always been such as could be characterized as harmonious and stable. Each sect took it for granted that there had always been and there will always be two sects in the village—Maronites and Greek Orthodox. Consequently, there had never been any attempt on the part of one sect to interfere with the religious practices of the other or to undertake any proselytizing campaign. Thirdly, religion in the village had always been an integral part of the whole village life. It was not a matter of dogma, or

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795 method of worship, cut apart and separated from
621 the practices of daily living. It was rather a way
771 of life. The church grew up with the village,
influencing it and at the same time being influenced
by the other aspects of village life. Thus, to cast
doubt upon the church meant casting doubt upon
village life altogether.

II

797 Early in the second half of the 19th century,
621 three religious missions appeared on the quiet
horizon of the Lebanon area—the Protestant
(mainly American), the Catholic (mainly French),
and the Greek Orthodox (Rumian). There were
other missions too—Italian, German, English, and
Scandinavian. However, the influence of these
did not reach Hishmieseen and they need not be
discussed here.

797 The American Presbyterian mission has always
been the most influential Protestant mission in
the country. They began their work early in the
second half of the 19th century. Beirut was their
first base, whence they reached out to the surround-
ing Lebanon villages. Later, they established a
second base in the town of Tripoli, from which they
began to work in the neighboring villages of the
Kara district, including Hishmieseen. About
797 1890, they succeeded in establishing a simple
621 elementary school at Hishmieseen. A native
872 Protestant teacher (man) was put in charge. A
simple square room was found, whose owner was
willing to rent it for the purpose. Tuition was
free and parents were encouraged to send their
children to the new school.

It seems that, at first, the people of the village

797 defined the new situation in a positive and favor-
621 able manner. They did not have to pay anything
872 extra for this new type of education. The mothers
found it convenient that some one should take care
of their children when they were not needed for
farm work. At the same time, the rising silk
trade created a demand for individuals able to
write and use simple arithmetic. Some of the
parents began to realize that it was necessary for
their children to learn how to calculate, read, and
write accurately. Further, during that period, the
silk trade had begun to bring the village people
in contact with the outside—Tripoli and Beirut—
where there were learned people who held high
positions in life. As a consequence of that con-
tact, there was growing in the village a vague
consciousness of the worthwhileness of learning
and knowledge. The Arabic word "ilm," the
equivalent for knowledge, was beginning to assert
itself in the village vocabulary. In a word, the
stage was set for the establishment of a regular
school, and the villagers seemed willing to
cooperate.

797 But that initial definition of the situation did not
798 last very long. A new element appeared, a very
significant element, which made the villagers more
wary of what was taking place. It was observed
that a new type of religion was being taught at the
school—aside from "innocent" arithmetic, reading,
and writing—and that every Sunday the "foreign"
missionary would come to the school and preach
the Gospel in a new fashion to the students and
others who gathered around. The people were not
ready to tolerate this new element. It meant a
direct attack upon the authority of the church,
and this meant nothing less than undermining the
integrity of village life as a whole. At the same
time, the Russian mission did not like the idea of
the Protestant mission working in the Greek
Orthodox villages of the Kura district. Through
the native Bishop of the district, they encouraged
the villagers to do something about it. The
instructions were "Do everything but don't touch
the person of the missionary."

One Sunday, when the missionary came to the
village to do his weekly preaching, the village
leaders had already prepared a group of youths for
action. At the appointed hour, the youths moved
to the mission school and began throwing and mak-
ing deafening noise by beating on empty cans, while
the missionary and the teacher conducted the
meeting inside. In a short while the noise became

797 more menacing, and the two men had to leave the
 798 village. The following Sunday, the mob attacked
 the school and threw the benches into the street.
 The school was closed, within one year of its
 beginning. ("...One Sunday, our service (in
 Bishmizem) was broken up by a mob of boys,
 throwing stones at doors and windows and beating
 tins and shouting. It appeared, however, that
 persons of most influence were on our side, and
 the government has issued an order to the people
 to respect our rights." From the 1896 Mission
 Report, Beirut, Lebanon.)

797 However, the incident left its mark upon the
 621 village. Among the people there were some who
 872 looked into the future and felt the urgent need of
 education for their children. The mission school
 offered them the opportunity, and they were
 determined to grasp it. For the time being, they
 kept quiet.

Within the following two years, the desire for a
 school in the village grew very strong. A delega-
 tion of elders was sent to Tripoli to interview the
 Bishop about the matter. They requested him
 to establish a school in Bishmizem. The Bishop
 was reluctant about that. He advised them to
 send their children to the Russian mission school
 in the neighboring village of Amryon. Their
 feeling of community pride was aroused. They
 felt it was an insult that they should send their
 children to another village for education. Cer-
 tainly, their community was important enough to
 deserve a school. The Bishop resorted to another
 argument, which proved to be very tactless. He
 reminded the elders of the fact that the more
 sophisticated Bishmizem people were enough of
 a trouble for him without being educated in a
 regular school, and that school education would
 make them much more difficult to handle. The
 elders retorted by threatening to resort to the
 American mission and invite them to reopen the
 school. The Bishop reminded them of the danger
 such a move would involve for the religious beliefs
 of their children. One of the elders replied by
 saying, "Your Holiness, we don't mean that our
 children should change their faith; we want them
 to be educated as your Holiness was at a mission
 school. Your Holiness did not change your faith,
 and our children need not change theirs." (...
 These schools have been begun in this district
 (Kara). ... The poor old Greek Orthodox Bishop
 of Tripoli is at his wits end to know how to keep

797 hold of his people in these villages...." From
621 an undated Mission report.)

872 With that, the elders parted, went to the mission center and requested them to reopen the school in Bishminseem, promising to pay for the education of their children. The head of the mission reminded them of what they had done with the school two years previously. One of the elders retorted by reminding the missionary of what Christ said about forgiving one's brother seven times seventy! A new native teacher was appointed by the mission, and the school was reopened in Bishminseem.

797 The above story was dwelt upon with a view to
798 bringing forth several significant points. The
621 first of these is to emphasize the fact that the hostile reaction of Bishminseem to the mission did not take any serious violent character. In other places, the mission suffered serious persecution. This may be explained by two factors, a local one and a general one. Locally, the Bishminseem people had always been accustomed to live side by side with another religious group, the Moslem minority. They had learned how to tolerate the existence of another sect. Consequently, the appearance of a third sect, although shocking, was not as much so as it was in the case of other religious groups in complete isolation. The second factor derives from the general character of the Greek Orthodox church. It must be remembered that the Greek Orthodox or Eastern church has always been considered heretic by the Catholic church, due to the split which occurred in the early days of the Christian church. Since then, the Greek Orthodox sect have considered themselves as more "progressive." Further, the Greek Orthodox in Lebanon have always mixed with the Moslems of the country, much more so than the Maronites who secluded themselves on the mountain heights. Consequently one would expect the Greek Orthodox group of Bishminseem to be more open and tolerant toward the new message of the Presbyterian Mission.

621 The second point to be emphasized refers to the
794 manner in which the village elders argued with the Bishop and finally used a threat. That was unprecedented behavior, on the part of a lay village group toward high church authorities. As far as could be ascertained, that was the first incident of its kind in the village, possibly the first in the whole district. It is indeed hard to evaluate the significance of such a move. One may see in

621 it the beginning of a movement that may be
794 termed "progressive." On the other hand, one
can see the dangers it implied for village solidarity.

621 A third significant point to observe is that a new
578 type of conflict arose in the village, as a result of
the school incident. It was conflict between two
new groups—those who wanted to have a Protest-
ant school in the village and those who opposed
the idea. It was a division that cut across the
family and church groups. It was also conflict
between a traditional value and a new one—
between the need for the preservation of church
integrity and the need for education. All of this
tended to shake the village organization; all of it
demanded new adjustments on the part of the
people.

III

871 After the first Mission teacher left the village,
179 his students, and the village people in general, were
191 set afire by the desire for further education.
621 Other mission teachers came to the village and
gave additional impetus to that desire. At the
same time the first emigrants began to return to
the village and tell the people about the wonders
of education in that "marvellous country of
America." English was the language through
which they could attain some status with the
American people and reap some of the gold in that
country. They wanted their children to learn
English and get an American type of education.
The Syrian Protestant College at Beirut was be-
ginning to flourish, and the road was now open for
a village boy to become a doctor or a college
teacher. All of this meant more cash income, and
cash was becoming more and more the significant
symbol of comfort and new forms of prestige.
Village boys and girls began to come back from
Tripoli with American high school certificates in
their hands. They were "fully" educated and
they could share in the establishment and running
of an independent village school.

871 All of these factors combined to bring about the
621 fruition of the village school idea. In 1904, under
575 the leadership of the Mission's early students and
some influential emigrants who had returned to
the village, a fully representative society, the first
in the history of the village, was formed and given
the name of "Raja-el-Watan"—the hope of the
country—the country here meaning nothing more
than the village. The sole aim of the society was to
establish and run a school for the whole village
community.

871 From the beginning the village people agreed to the idea of having their girls get the same education as boys, and in the same school house. The move was a departure from the commonly held belief of the area that the girl should be kept at home. However, Bishmizseen had been prepared for that. The American girls' school at Tripoli was the first strong influence. A few of the progressive leaders sent their girls to the Tripoli school. When these returned they were anxious to give the same chance to all village girls. Aside from that, the two sexes in Bishmizseen had always mixed freely—as groups, not as individuals. To have both sexes at the same school was not altogether outside the scope of the village tradition. At the same time returned emigrants had their influence, too. Also it must be noted that the silk factory had already paved the way for the mixing of the two sexes in one institution. If the villagers had accepted that, it was not so difficult for them to see their girls and boys studying together under the supervision of men and women teachers. Consequently, the idea was accepted, and the coeducational school began to function smoothly and normally.

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621 Within a few years the school became the focus of village life. It seems that the mere physical existence of the school building—a building that belonged to the community as a whole—made it possible for various new community activities to take place. The school society began to find it more logical and more convenient to hold its meetings in the school building. General village meetings, also began to take place there. From this, the next step was to hold receptions at the school and invite people from neighboring villages. At first only village talent was used at these receptions; then talent from the city, in the form of lecturers, poets and singers, was brought in. This added to the impetus of the educational movement in the village. The villagers became proud of their school and highly conscious of their community—Bishmizseen, the village of education.

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[177] One more vital activity began to take place at the school, involving the whole of the village community and other villages, too. That was the acting of plays. Several factors contributed to the creation of this activity—returned emigrants, contact with the educational circles of Tripoli and Beirut, and the early mission school teachers. The desire had been there for some time, but it could not be satisfied, due to the lack of a suitable building. Shortly after the school building was

536 erected, play acting materialized. At first only
517 young men acted. A year or two later, girls
began to act, too. The village could not go
beyond that and allow boys and girls to act
together. That involved kissing and embracing
between boys and girls on the stage, and the village
held to the idea that such a kiss or an intimate
embrace must be reserved to married couples!

834 It is essential that we should dwell briefly on
562 the attitude of the village people towards acting
536 by girls. The villagers had a strong taboo against
578 acting by girls. Acting involved the parading of
the girl on the stage in front of the crowd including
young men and strangers. Remarks might be
made about the girl, causing trouble between her
family and those who made the remarks. Such
parading had the further implication that the
parents were eager to present their girl for mar-
riage. That went against the custom which
demanded that the girl should wait at home until
her suitor came for her. The strongest objection
was due to the fact that the people had always
associated regular actresses with "bad morals."
Gradually, due to the influence of leading families
who were willing to begin with their girls, all of
the above objections were broken down, until
acting by the girls became a matter of course.

536 Within a few years acting became one more
621 established village festival, involving the whole
community. They had been accustomed to re-
ligious village festivals, and it was natural to fit
the play in with the previous pattern and make
of it one more such festival. Without any excep-
tion, everybody—actors, workers, church authori-
ties and leaders—offered his or her services free,
for the community welfare. Over a period of two
months, preparation for the play would engage
the attention of the village with everybody waiting
for the occasion with thrilled anticipation. The
preparation involved the various activities of
casting, renting the equipment from Tripoli,
constructing the stage, evening rehearsals, ener-
getic arguments to persuade a certain girl to accept
a certain role and her parents to permit her to act,
and the distribution of invitations to the neighbor-
ing villages. Two or three days before the play,
the village children would enlist as volunteers who
would go from house to house in the village and
gather all available chairs to seat the guests. The
children's reward was the enjoyment of the activity
itself and free admission during one evening. The
play would be presented for three or four nights.

536 On each occasion, a huge crowd, from Bishmizzeen
621 and neighboring villages would attend. An admission was charged, but no regular fee was assigned. Each paid what his "generosity" allowed. That was one more example of how the village fitted a new item of behavior into its established folkways. The income of the play was used for the school.

From the above description, it can be readily observed how play acting, centering in the village school, helped to bring about active village cooperation, a heightened consciousness of community identity, and an active inter-village association.

536 However, one must not neglect to mention a
621 highly significant point, one more indication of
186 what was going to happen to the village in its newly chosen trend. Not a single one of the plays that have been acted in the village had any relationship to village and farm life. The language used was always the higher literary form of Arabic, which had little connection with the local forms of expression. The theme of the play was either copied from Western novels or referred to old Biblical or historical events. Keeping in mind the tremendous influence of the play, by playing upon the emotions of the village people and creating in them a dynamic for new modes of behavior, one can realize to what extent it was influential in carrying the people away from the village. It widened the horizon of village life, as did the school, emigration, and the silk industry; but the horizon was widened to an extent that was conducive to the destruction of the community integrity.

IV

871 When the modern educational movement began
179 in the country some fifty years ago, several educational systems appeared in the field and competed with each other in their effort to influence the people. These systems had a variety of cultural backgrounds—English, Russian, German, Italian, French, American, Turkish, and native. None of these systems had a purely educational character. Their educational message was combined either with religious, or political aims, or both.

In the course of time, each of these systems came to concentrate its influence upon one area of the country or one section of the population. In the case of Bishmizzeen, as was indicated above, the American Protestant system has been the most p-342 (A)

371 influential. This has been due to several factors,
177 as was shown in the previous discussion—the early start of the Protestant mission in the village, the leading personality of Anis Sallum, the failure of the Russian mission to establish a school in Bishmizzen, and emigration by the village people to the United States.

The following figures show to what extent the Bishmizzen people have been educated at American, French, and native schools, outside the village. No other system of education has been able to reach that community. The figures cover a period of fifty years, from 1890 to 1939, and show the number of men or women who have been educated at high schools or colleges. A total of 140 people have attended American high schools or colleges, for one or more years. Of these, 78 are men and 62 women. The share of the high schools is 99 (48 men and 51 women). The share of the college is 41 (30 men and 11 women).

It should be observed that men and women have been reached equally by the high school, as regards the number educated and the starting period in the history of the village. However, with reference to college students, there are almost three times as many men as women. Also, men started to go to college much earlier. A possible explanation for the discrepancy is that a high school education was as far as the village traditions would go in the case of girls. After all, the status of woman has always been that of a housewife and mother. A more plausible explanation is that the American Protestant mission in those early days did not encourage college education for girls. Before 1970, the mission had no provision for girls' college education.

Coming to French high schools and colleges, we find that only 16 people have been touched by that system of education—11 men and 5 women. Of these 11 (6 men and 5 women) went to high school while only 5 (men) went to college.

The following figures on native education cover only high school, for no native college education has ever been established in Lebanon. A total of 56 people (16 men and 40 women) have been educated at native high schools. The great excess of women over men in this case is due to the presence of a good sectarian school (Greek Orthodox) for girls in addition to the state school for both sexes. Native education is a new movement in the country, and it has not yet had the time to assume a stable and distinctive character.

P.342 (A)

871 In all, there are some 21 people (105 men and
177 107 women) who have had one or more years of
554 education at high schools and colleges outside the
village. Of these, 66 percent have been educated
by the American system, 2 percent by the native
system, and 7 percent by the French system.
These figures ought to indicate, in a concise and
clear manner, the great extent to which American
culture, behind the Protestant system of education,
has been influential in the life of Bishmizseen.
The extent of this influence becomes still more
impressive, when we remember that these educated
men and women represent the "cream" of the
village population and have become, in the ma-
jority of cases, the recognized leaders of the
community, (remembering that 24 of them com-
pleted college and 72 completed high school).
Their leadership was inspired by a foreign culture
that had no ties with village life, and they led the
village according to the influence of that culture.

871 Behind each educated man and woman is a story
177 of supreme effort and sacrifice on the part of his
family group. It meant, in many cases, that the
554 family group had to sell their land in order to
178 provide for the higher education of their boy or
girl. Taking such a drastic step was symbolic of
their decision to sever their ties with the old way
of living and look toward the new course taken
by their children. Through their educated chil-
dren, the old folk identified themselves with the
new patterns of the invading American culture.

621 A strong combination of factors—the rising silk
178 industry, money as a coveted value, play acting,
871 and emigration to America, got hold of the village

P. 343 (a)

621 community and forced it to turn its face toward
178 the outside and embark upon a new course. One
871 more such alienating factor has been the school
curriculum. In Bishmisseeen, the children studied
English, French, Literary Arabic, Geography,
History—to the end of the list, even algebra!
Not a single one of these subjects was related to
the immediate needs of village life. The school
curriculum prepared the child for a life that was
vastly different from his village life. Later at high
school and college, the curriculum finished up the
process of alienation begun in the village school.

A glance at the following figures will give us an
impressive picture of what has happened to the 212
educated members of the little community. Of
them, 31 are still going through the process, follow-
ing new paths of education. Only 30 live in the
village and work on farms, and these are not
satisfied with their lot. An additional 27 live in
the village but do not work on the farm. There
are 59 who belong to the village in a nominal way.
Their work is established in Tripoli and Beirut,
and they come back to the village for a few weeks
during the summer. The remaining 65 (one-third)
have left the village for good; they are migrants
living mostly in foreign countries.

Perhaps that old village priest had a vision of
what was going to happen to the village in the far
future, when he prevented the writer's grandfather
from sending his son to school in Beirut. "Don't
send the boy there," he warned, "for he will never
go back to the farm." Most of the educated
village youths never did, and many a farm is now
deserted.

p. 343 (8)